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THE  
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OF  
EURIPIDES

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE  
WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES BY  
GILBERT MURRAY, LL.D., D.LITT.  
REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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**HIPPOLYTUS**

## CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

THE GODDESS APHRODITÊ.

THE GODDESS ARTEMIS.

THESEUS, *King of Athens and Trozên.*

PHAEDRA, *daughter of Minos, King of Crete, wife to Theseus.*

HIPPOLYTUS, *bastard son of Theseus and the Amazon Hippolytê.*

THE NURSE OF PHAEDRA.

AN OLD HUNTSMAN.

A HENCHMAN OF HIPPOLYTUS.

A CHORUS OF HUNTSMEN.

A CHORUS OF TROZENIAN WOMEN, WITH THEIR LEADER.

ATTENDANTS ON THE THREE ROYAL PERSONS.

*"The scene is laid in Trozên. The play was first acted when Epameinon was Archon, Olympiad 87, year 4 (B.C. 429). Euripides was first, Iophon second, Ion third."*

## HIPPOLYTUS

*The scene represents the front of the royal castle of Trozên, the chief door being in the centre, facing the audience. Two statues are visible, that of ARTEMIS on the right, that of APHRODITE or CYPRISS on the left. The goddess APHRODITE is discovered alone.*

### APHRODITE.

Great among men, and not unnamed am I,  
The Cyprian, in God's inmost halls on high.  
And wheresoe'er from Pontus to the far  
Red West men dwell, and see the glad day-star,  
And worship Me, the pious heart I bless,  
And wreck that life that lives in stubbornness.  
For that there is, even in a great God's mind,  
That hungereth for the praise of human kind.

So runs my word ; and soon the very deed  
Shall follow. For this Prince of Theseus' seed,  
Hippolytus, child of that dead Amazon,  
And reared by saintly Pittheus in his own  
Strait ways, hath dared, alone of all Trozên,  
To hold me least of spirits and most mean,  
And spurns my spell and seeks no woman's kiss.  
But great Apollo's sister, Artemis,

Yea, and most high thine home,  
 Child of the Father's hall ;  
 Hear, O most virginal,  
 Hear, O most fair of all,  
 In high God's golden dome.

[*The huntsmen have gathered about the altar of ARTEMIS. HIPPOLYTUS now advances from them, and approaches the Statue with a wreath in his hand.*

HIPPOLYTUS.

To thee this wreath'd garland, from a green  
 And virgin meadow bear I, O my Queen,  
 Where never shepherd leads his grazing ewes  
 Nor scythe has touched. Only the river dews  
 Gleam, and the spring bee sings, and in the glade  
 Hath Solitude her mystic garden made.

No evil hand may cull it : only he  
 Whose heart hath known the heart of Purity,  
 Unlearned of man, and true whate'er befall.  
 Take therefore from pure hands this coronal,  
 O mistress loved, thy golden hair to twine.  
 For, sole of living men, this grace is mine,  
 To dwell with thee, and speak, and hear replies  
 Of voice divine, though none may see thine eyes.

Oh, keep me to the end in this same road !

[*An OLD HUNTSMAN, who has stood apart from the rest, here comes up to HIPPOLYTUS.*

HUNTSMAN.

My Prince—for 'Master' name I none but God—  
 Gave I good counsel, wouldst thou welcome it ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Right gladly, friend ; else were I poor of wit.

HUNTSMAN.

Knowest thou one law, that through the world has  
won ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

What wouldst thou ? And how runs thy law ?  
Say on.

HUNTSMAN.

It hates that Pride that speaks not all men fair !

HIPPOLYTUS.

And rightly. Pride breeds hatred everywhere.

HUNTSMAN.

And good words love, and grace in all men's sight ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Aye, and much gain withal, for trouble slight.

HUNTSMAN.

How deem'st thou of the Gods ? Are they the same ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Surely : we are but fashioned on their frame.

HUNTSMAN.

Why then wilt thou be proud, and worship not . . .

HIPPOLYTUS.

Whom ? If the name be speakable, speak out !

HUNTSMAN.

She stands here at thy gate : the Cyprian Queen !

HIPPOLYTUS.

I greet her from afar : my life is clean.

HUNTSMAN.

Clean? Nay, proud, proud ; a mark for all to scan !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Each mind hath its own bent, for God or man.

HUNTSMAN.

God grant thee happiness . . . and wiser thought !

HIPPOLYTUS.

These Spirits that reign in darkness like me not.

HUNTSMAN.

What the Gods ask, O Son, that man must pay !

HIPPOLYTUS (*turning from him to the others*).

On, huntsmen, to the Castle ! Make your way  
Straight to the feast room ; 'tis a merry thing  
After the chase, a board of banqueting.

And see the steeds be groomed, and in array  
The chariot dight. I drive them forth to-day.

[*He pauses, and makes a slight gesture of reverence  
to the Statue on the left. Then to the OLD  
HUNTSMAN.*

That for thy Cyprian, friend, and nought beside !

[HIPPOLYTUS *follows the huntsmen, who stream  
off by the central door into the Castle. The  
OLD HUNTSMAN remains.*



HUNTSMAN (*approaching the Statue and kneeling*).

O Cyprian—for a young man in his pride  
 I will not follow!—here before thee, meek,  
 In that one language that a slave may speak,  
 I pray thee; Oh, if some wild heart in froth  
 O youth surges against thee, be not wroth  
 For ever! Nay, be far and hear not then:  
 Gods should be gentler and more wise than men!

*[He rises and follows the others into the Castle.*

*The Orchestra is empty for a moment, then there enter from right and left several Trozenian women, young and old. Their number eventually amounts to fifteen.*

#### CHORUS.

There riseth a rock-born river,  
 Of Ocean's tribe, men say;  
 The crags of it gleam and quiver,  
 And pitchers dip in the spray:  
 A woman was there with raiment white  
 To bathe and spread in the warm sunlight,  
 And she told a tale to me there by the river,  
 The tale of the Queen and her evil day:

How, ailing beyond allayment,  
 Within she hath bowed her head,  
 And with shadow of silken raiment  
 The bright brown hair bespread.  
 For three long days she hath lain forlorn,  
 Her lips untainted of flesh or corn,  
 For that secret sorrow beyond allayment  
 That steers to the far sad shore of the dead.

*Some Women.*

Is this some Spirit, O child of man ?  
 Doth Hecat hold thee perchance, or Pan ?  
 Doth She of the Mountains work her ban,  
 Or the dread Corybantes bind thee ?

*Others.*

Nay, is it sin that upon thee lies,  
 Sin of forgotten sacrifice,  
 In thine own Dictynna's sea-wild eyes ?  
 Who in Limna here can find thee ;  
 For the Deep's dry floor is her easy way,  
 And she moves in the salt wet whirl of the spray.

*Other Women.*

Or doth the Lord of Erechtheus' race,  
 Thy Theseus, watch for a fairer face,  
 For secret arms in a silent place,  
 Far from thy love or chiding ?

*Others.*

Or hath there landed, amid the loud  
 Hum of Piraeus' sailor-crowd,  
 Some Cretan venturer, weary-browed,  
 Who bears to the Queen some tiding ;  
 Some far home-grief, that hath bowed her low,  
 And chained her soul to a bed of woe ?

*An Older Woman.*

Nay—know ye not ?—this burden hath alway lain  
 On the devious being of woman ; yea, burdens twain,  
 The burden of Wild Will and the burden of Pain.  
 Through my heart once that wind of terror sped ;  
 But I, in fear confessèd,

Cried from the dark to Her in heavenly bliss,  
 The Helper of Pain, the Bow-Maid Artemis :  
 Whose feet I praise for ever, where they tread  
 Far off among the blessed !

## THE LEADER.

But see, the Queen's grey nurse at the door,  
 Sad-eyed and sterner, methinks, than of yore,  
 With the Queen. Doth she lead her hither,  
 To the wind and sun ?—Ah, fain would I know  
 What strange betiding hath blanched that brow,  
 And made that young life wither.

*[The NURSE comes out from the central door,  
 followed by PHAEDRA, who is supported by  
 two handmaids. They make ready a couch  
 for PHAEDRA to lie upon.]*

## NURSE.

O sick and sore are the days of men !  
 What wouldst thou ? What shall I change again ?  
 Here is the Sun for thee ; here is the sky ;  
 And thy weary pillows wind-swept lie,  
 By the castle door.

But the cloud of thy brow is dark, I ween ;  
 And soon thou wilt back to thy bower within :  
 So swift to change is the path of thy feet,  
 And near things hateful, and far things sweet ;  
 So was it before !

- Oh, pain were better than tending pain !  
 For that were single, and this is twain,  
 With grief of heart and labour of limb.  
 Yet all man's life is but ailing and dim,  
 And rest upon earth comes never.

But if any far-off state there be,  
 Dearer than life to mortality ;  
 The hand of the Dark hath hold thereof,  
 And mist is under and mist above.  
 And so we are sick for life, and cling  
 On earth to this nameless and shining thing.  
 For other life is a fountain sealed,  
 And the deeps below us are unrevealed,  
 And we drift on legends for ever !  
 [PHAEDRA *during this has been laid on her couch ;*  
*she speaks to the handmaids.*

## PHAEDRA.

Yes ; lift me : not my head so low.  
 There, hold my arms.—Fair arms they  
 seem !—  
 My poor limbs scarce obey me now !  
 Take off that hood that weighs my brow,  
 And let my long hair stream.

## NURSE.

Nay, toss not, Child, so feveredly.  
 The sickness best will win relief  
 By quiet rest and constancy.  
 All men have grief.

PHAEDRA (*not noticing her*).

Oh for a deep and dewy spring,  
 With runlets cold to draw and drink !  
 And a great meadow blossoming,  
 Long-grassed, and poplars in a ring,  
 To rest me by the brink !

NURSE.

Nay, Child ! Shall strangers hear this tone  
So wild, and thoughts so fever-flown ?

PHAEDRA.

Oh, take me to the Mountain ! Oh,  
Past the great pines and through the wood,  
Up where the lean hounds softly go,  
A-whine for wild things' blood,  
And madly flies the dappled roe.  
O God, to shout and speed them there,  
An arrow by my chestnut hair  
Drawn tight, and one keen glimmering spear—  
Ah ! if I could !

NURSE.

What wouldst thou with them—fancies all !—  
Thy hunting and thy fountain brink ?  
What wouldst thou ? By the city wall  
Canst hear our own brook plash and fall  
Downhill, if thou wouldst drink.

PHAEDRA.

O Mistress of the Sea-lorn Mere  
Where horse-hoofs beat the sand and sing,  
O Artemis, that I were there  
To tame Enetian steeds and steer  
Swift chariots in the ring !

NURSE.

Nay, mountainward but now thy hands  
Yearned out, with craving for the chase ;  
And now toward the unseaswept sands  
Thou roamest, where the coursers pace !

O wild young steed, what prophet knows  
 The power that holds thy curb, and throws  
 Thy swift heart from its race ?

*[At these words PHAEDRA gradually recovers  
 herself and pays attention.]*

PHAEDRA.

What have I said ? Woe's me ! And where  
 Gone straying from my wholesome mind ?  
 What ? Did I fall in some god's snare ?  
 —Nurse, veil my head again, and blind  
 Mine eyes.—There is a tear behind  
 That lash.—Oh, I am sick with shame !  
 Aye, but it hath a sting,  
 To come to reason ; yet the name  
 Of madness is an awful thing.—  
 Could I but die in one swift flame  
 Unthinking, unknowing !

NURSE.

I veil thy face, Child.—Would that so  
 Mine own were veiled for evermore,  
 So sore I love thee ! . . . Though the lore  
 Of long life mocks me, and I know  
 How love should be a lightsome thing  
 Not rooted in the deep o' the heart ;  
 With gentle ties, to twine apart  
 If need so call, or closer cling.—  
 Why do I love thee so ? O fool,  
 O fool, the heart that bleeds for twain,  
 And builds, men tell us, walls of pain,  
 To walk by love's unswerving rule,

The same for ever, stern and true !  
 For 'Thorough' is no word of peace :  
 'Tis 'Naught-too-much' makes trouble cease,  
 And many a wise man bows thereto.

[*The LEADER OF THE CHORUS here approaches  
 the NURSE.*

LEADER.

Nurse of our Queen, thou watcher old and true,  
 We see her great affliction, but no clue  
 Have we to learn the sickness. Wouldst thou tell  
 The name and sort thereof, 'twould like us well.

NURSE.

Small leechcraft have I, and she tells no man.

LEADER.

Thou know'st no cause ? Nor when the unrest began ?

NURSE.

It all comes to the same. She will not speak.

LEADER (*turning and looking at PHAEDRA*).

How she is changed and wasted ! And how weak !

NURSE.

'Tis the third day she hath fasted utterly.

LEADER.

What, is she mad ? Or doth she seek to die ?

NURSE.

I know not. But to death it sure must lead.

LEADER.

'Tis strange that Theseus takes hereof no heed.

NURSE.

She hides her wound, and vows it is not so.

LEADER.

Can he not look into her face and know ?

NURSE.

Nay, he is on a journey these last days.

LEADER.

Canst thou not force her, then ? Or think of ways  
To trap the secret of the sick heart's pain ?

NURSE.

Have I not tried all ways, and all in vain ?  
Yet will I cease not now, and thou shalt tell  
If in her grief I serve my mistress well !

*[She goes across to where PHAEDRA lies ; and presently, while speaking, kneels by her.]*

Dear daughter mine, all that before was said  
Let both of us forget ; and thou instead  
Be kindlier, and unlock that prisoned brow.  
And I, who followed then the wrong road, now  
Will leave it and be wiser. If thou fear  
Some secret sickness, there be women here  
To give thee comfort. *[PHAEDRA shakes her head.]*

No ; not secret ? Then

Is it a sickness meet for aid of men ?  
Speak, that a leech may tend thee.



Silent still ?

Nay, Child, what profits silence ? If 'tis ill  
This that I counsel, make me see the wrong :  
If well, then yield to me.

Nay, Child, I long

For one kind word, one look !

[PHAEDRA lies motionless. The NURSE rises.

Oh, woe is me !

Women, we labour here all fruitlessly,  
All as far off as ever from her heart !

She ever scorned me, and now hears no part  
Of all my prayers ! [Turning to PHAEDRA again.

Nay, hear thou shalt, and be,

If so thou will, more wild than the wild sea ;

But know, thou art thy little ones' betrayer !

If thou die now, shall child of thine be heir

To Theseus' castle ? Nay, not thine, I ween,

But hers ! That barbèd Amazonian Queen

Hath left a child to bend thy children low,

A bastard royal-hearted—sayst not so ?—

Hippolytus . . .

PHAEDRA.

Ah !

[She starts up, sitting, and throws the veil off.

NURSE.

That stings thee ?

PHAEDRA.

Nurse, most sore

Thou hast hurt me ! In God's name, speak that name  
no more.

NURSE.

Thou seest? Thy mind is clear; but with thy mind  
Thou wilt not save thy children, nor be kind  
To thine own life.

PHAEDRA.

My children? Nay, most dear  
I love them.—Far, far other grief is here.

NURSE (*after a pause, wondering*).

Thy hand is clean, O Child, from stain of blood?

PHAEDRA.

My hand is clean; but is my heart, O God?

NURSE.

Some enemy's spell hath made thy spirit dim?

PHAEDRA.

He hates me not that slays me, nor I him.

NURSE.

Theseus, the King, hath wronged thee in man's wise?

PHAEDRA.

Ah, could but I stand guiltless in his eyes!

NURSE.

O speak! What is this death-fraught mystery?

PHAEDRA.

Nay, leave me to my wrong. I wrong not thee.

**NURSE** (*suddenly throwing herself in supplication at PHAEDRA's feet*).

Not wrong me, whom thou wouldst all desolate leave !

**PHAEDRA** (*rising and trying to move away*).

What wouldst thou? Force me? Clinging to my sleeve?

**NURSE.**

Yea, to thy knees; and weep; and let not go!

**PHAEDRA.**

Woe to thee, Woman, if thou learn it, woe!

**NURSE.**

I know no bitterer woe than losing thee.

**PHAEDRA.**

I am lost! Yet the deed shall honour me.

**NURSE.**

Why hide what honours thee? 'Tis all I claim!

**PHAEDRA.**

Why, so I build up honour out of shame!

**NURSE.**

Then speak, and higher still thy fame shall stand.

**PHAEDRA.**

Go, in God's name!—Nay, leave me; loose my hand!

**NURSE.**

Never, until thou grant me what I pray.

PHAEDRA (*yielding, after a pause*).

So be it. I dare not tear that hand away.

NURSE (*rising and releasing PHAEDRA*).

Tell all thou wilt, Daughter. I speak no more.

PHAEDRA (*after a long pause*).

Mother, poor Mother, that didst love so sore !

NURSE.

What mean'st thou, Child ? The Wild Bull of the  
Tide ?

PHAEDRA.

And thou, sad sister, Dionysus' bride !

NURSE.

Child ! wouldst thou shame the house where thou  
wast born ?

PHAEDRA.

And I the third, sinking most all-forlorn !

NURSE (*to herself*).

I am all lost and feared. What will she say ?

PHAEDRA.

From there my grief comes, not from yesterday.

NURSE.

I come no nearer to thy parable.

PHAEDRA.

Oh, would that thou couldst tell what I must tell !

NURSE.

I am no seer in things I wot not of.

PHAEDRA (*again hesitating*).

What is it that they mean, who say men . . . love ?

NURSE.

A thing most sweet, my Child, yet dolorous.

PHAEDRA.

Only the half, belike, hath fallen on us !

NURSE (*starting*).

On thee ? Love ?—Oh, what sayst thou ? What man's son ?

PHAEDRA.

What man's ? There was a Queen, an Amazon . . .

NURSE.

Hippolytus, sayst thou ?

PHAEDRA (*again wrapping her face in the veil*).

Nay, 'twas thou, not I !

[PHAEDRA *sinks back on the couch and covers her face again. The NURSE starts violently from her and walks up and down.*

NURSE.

O God ! what wilt thou say, Child ? Wouldst thou try  
To kill me ?—Oh, 'tis more than I can bear ;  
Women, I will no more of it, this glare  
Of hated day, this shining of the sky.  
I will fling down my body, and let it lie  
Till life be gone !

Women, God rest with you,  
 My works are over ! For the pure and true  
 Are forced to evil, against their own heart's vow,  
 And love it !

*[She suddenly sees the Statue of CYPRIS, and stands  
 with her eyes riveted upon it.]*

Ah, Cyprian ! No god art thou,  
 But more than god, and greater, that hath thrust  
 Me and my queen and all our house to dust !

*[She throws herself on the ground close to the statue.]*

CHORUS.

*Some Women.*

O Women, have ye heard ? Nay, dare ye hear  
 The desolate cry of the young Queen's misery ?

*A Woman.*

My Queen, I love thee dear,  
 Yet liefer were I dead than framed like thee.

*Others.*

Woe, woe to me for this thy bitter bane,  
 Surely the food man feeds upon is pain !

*Others.*

How wilt thou bear thee through this livelong day,  
 Lost, and thine evil naked to the light ?  
 Strange things are close upon us—who shall say  
 How strange ?—save one thing that is plain to sight,  
 The stroke of the Cyprian and the fall thereof  
 On thee, thou child of the Isle of fearful Love !

*[PHAEDRA during this has risen from the couch  
 and comes forward collectedly. As she speaks  
 the NURSE gradually rouses herself, and listens  
 more calmly.]*

## PHAEDRA.

O Women, dwellers in this portal-seat  
Of Pelops' land, gazing towards my Crete,  
How oft, in other days than these, have I  
Through night's long hours thought of man's misery,  
And how this life is wrecked! And, to mine eyes,  
Not in man's knowledge, not in wisdom, lies  
The lack that makes for sorrow. Nay, we scan  
And know the right—for wit hath many a man—  
But will not to the last end strive and serve.  
For some grow too soon weary, and some swerve  
To other paths, setting before the Right  
The diverse far-off image of Delight;  
And many are delights beneath the sun!  
Long hours of converse; and to sit alone  
Musing—a deadly happiness!—and Shame:  
Though two things there be hidden in one name,  
And Shame can be slow poison if it will!

This is the truth I saw then, and see still;  
Nor is there any magic that can stain  
That white truth for me, or make me blind again.  
Come, I will show thee how my spirit hath moved.  
When the first stab came, and I knew I loved,  
I cast about how best to face mine ill.  
And the first thought that came, was to be still  
And hide my sickness.—For no trust there is  
In man's tongue, that so well admonishes  
And counsels and betrays, and waxes fat  
With griefs of its own gathering!—After that  
I would my madness bravely bear, and try  
To conquer by mine own heart's purity.

My third mind, when these two availed me naught

To quell love, was to die—

[*Motion of protest among the Women.*  
the best, best thought—

—Gainsay me not—of all that man can say !  
I would not have mine honour hidden away ;  
Why should I have my shame before men's eyes  
Kept living ? And I knew, in deadly wise,  
Shame was the deed and shame the suffering ;  
And I a woman, too, to face the thing,  
Despised of all !

Oh, utterly accurst

Be she of women, whoso dared the first  
To cast her honour out to a strange man !  
'Twas in some great house, surely, that began  
This plague upon us ; then the baser kind,  
When the good led towards evil, followed blind  
And joyous ! Cursed be they whose lips are clean  
And wise and seemly, but their hearts within  
Rank with bad daring ! How can they, O Thou  
That walkest on the waves, great Cyprian, how  
Smile in their husbands' faces, and not fall,  
Not cower before the Darkness that knows all,  
Aye, dread the dead still chambers, lest one day  
The stones find voice, and all be finished !

Nay,

Friends, 'tis for this I die ; lest I stand there  
Having shamed my husband and the babes I bare.  
In ancient Athens they shall some day dwell,  
My babes, free men, free-spoken, honourable,  
And when one asks their mother, proud of me !  
For, oh, it cows a man, though bold he be,  
To know a mother's or a father's sin.

'Tis written, one way is there, one, to win



This life's race, could man keep it from his birth,  
 A true clean spirit. And through all this earth  
 To every false man, that hour comes apace  
 When Time holds up a mirror to his face,  
 And girl-like, marvelling, there he stares to see  
 How foul his heart ! Be it not so with me !

## LEADER OF CHORUS.

Ah God, how sweet is virtue, and how wise,  
 And honour its due meed in all men's eyes !

NURSE (*who has now risen and recovered herself*).

Mistress, a sharp swift terror struck me low  
 A moment since, hearing of this thy woe.  
 But now—I was a coward ! And men say  
 Our second thought the wiser is alway.

This is no monstrous thing ; no grief too dire  
 To meet with quiet thinking. In her ire  
 A most strong goddess hath swept down on thee.  
 Thou lovest. Is that so strange ? Many there be  
 Beside thee ! . . . And because thou lovest, wilt fall  
 And die ! And must all lovers die, then ? All  
 That are or shall be ? A blithe law for them !  
 Nay, when in might she swoops, no strength can stem  
 Cypris ; and if man yields him, she is sweet ;  
 But is he proud and stubborn ? From his feet  
 She lifts him, and—how think you ?—flings to scorn !

She ranges with the stars of eve and morn,  
 She wanders in the heaving of the sea,  
 And all life lives from her.—Aye, this is she  
 That sows Love's seed and brings Love's fruit to  
 birth ;  
 And great Love's brethren are all we on earth !

Nay, they who con grey books of ancient days  
 Or dwell among the Muses, tell—and praise—  
 How Zeus himself once yearned for Semelê ;  
 How maiden Eôs in her radiancy  
 Swept Kephalos to heaven away, away,  
 For sore love's sake. And there they dwell, men  
 say,

And fear not, fret not ; for a thing too stern  
 Hath met and crushed them !

And must thou, then, turn  
 And struggle ? Sprang there from thy father's blood  
 Thy little soul all lonely ? Or the god  
 That rules thee, is he other than our gods ?

Nay, yield thee to men's ways, and kiss their rods !  
 How many, deem'st thou, of men good and wise,  
 Know their own home's blot, and avert their eyes ?  
 How many fathers, when a son has strayed  
 And toiled beneath the Cyprian, bring him aid,  
 Not chiding ? And man's wisdom e'er hath been  
 To keep what is not good to see, unseen !

A straight and perfect life is not for man ;  
 Nay, in a shut house, let him, if he can,  
 'Mid sheltered rooms, make all lines true. But here,  
 Out in the wide sea fallen, and full of fear,  
 Hopest thou so easily to swim to land ?

Canst thou but set thine ill days on one hand  
 And more good days on the other, verily,  
 O child of woman, life is well with thee !

*[She pauses, and then draws nearer to PHAEDRA.]*

Nay, dear my daughter, cease thine evil mind,  
 Cease thy fierce pride ! For pride it is, and blind,  
 To seek to outpass gods !—Love on and dare :  
 A god hath willed it ! And, since pain is there,

Make the pain sleep ! Songs are there to bring calm,  
 And magic words. And I shall find the balm,  
 Be sure, to heal thee. Else in sore dismay  
 Were men, could not we women find our way !

## LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Help is there, Queen, in all this woman says,  
 To ease thy suffering. But 'tis thee I praise ;  
 Albeit that praise is harder to thine ear  
 Than all her chiding was, and bitterer !

## PHAEDRA.

Oh, this it is hath flung to dogs and birds  
 Men's lives and homes and cities—fair false words !  
 Oh, why speak things to please our ears ? We crave  
 Not that. 'Tis honour, honour, we must save !

## NURSE.

Why prate so proud ? 'Tis no words, brave nor base,  
 Thou cravest ; 'tis a man's arms !

[PHAEDRA *moves indignantly.*

Up and face

The truth of what thou art, and name it straight !  
 Were not thy life thrown open here for Fate  
 To beat on ; hadst thou been a woman pure  
 Or wise or strong ; never had I for lure  
 Of joy nor heartache led thee on to this !  
 But when a whole life one great battle is,  
 To win or lose—no man can blame me then.

## PHAEDRA.

Shame on thee ! Lock those lips, and ne'er again  
 Let word nor thought so foul have harbour there !

NURSE.

Foul, if thou wilt : but better than the fair  
 For thee and me. And better, too, the deed  
 Behind them, if it save thee in thy need,  
 Than that word Honour thou wilt die to win !

PHAEDRA.

Nay, in God's name,—such wisdom and such sin  
 Are all about thy lips I—urge me no more.  
 For all the soul within me is wrought o'er  
 By Love ; and if thou speak and speak, I may  
 Be spent, and drift where now I shrink away.

NURSE.

Well, if thou wilt I—'Twere best never to err,  
 But, having erred, to take a counsellor  
 Is second.—Mark me now. I have within  
 Love-philtres, to make peace where storm hath been,  
 That, with no shame, no scathe of mind, shall save  
 Thy life from anguish ; wilt but thou be brave !

*[To herself, reflecting.]*

Ah, but from him, the well-beloved, some sign  
 We need, or word, or raiment's hem, to twine  
 Amid the charm, and one spell knit from twain.

PHAEDRA.

Is it a potion or a salve ? Be plain.

NURSE.

Who knows ? Seek to be helped, Child, not to know.

PHAEDRA.

Why art thou ever subtle ? I dread thee, so.

NURSE.

Thou wouldst dread everything!—What dost thou dread?

PHAEDRA.

Lest to his ear some word be whisper'd.

NURSE.

Let be, Child! I will make all well with thee!  
—Only do thou, O Cyprian of the Sea,  
Be with me! And mine own heart, come what  
may,

Shall know what ear to seek, what word to say!

*[The NURSE, having spoken these last words in prayer apart to the Statue of CYPRIUS, turns back and goes into the house. PHAEDRA sits pensive again on her couch till towards the end of the following Song, when she rises and bends close to the door.]*

CHORUS.

Erôs, Erôs, who blindest, tear by tear,  
Men's eyes with hunger; thou swift Foe,  
that pliest

Deep in our hearts joy like an edged spear;  
Come not to me with Evil haunting near,  
Wrath on the wind, nor jarring of the clear  
Wing's music as thou fliest!

There is no shaft that burneth, not in fire,  
Not in wild stars, far off and flinging fear,  
As in thine hands the shaft of All Desire,  
Erôs, Child of the Highest!

In vain, in vain, by old Alphetüs' shore

The blood of many bulls doth stain the river,  
 And all Greece bows on Phœbus' Pythian floor ;  
 Yet bring we to the Master of Man no store,  
 The Keybearer, who standeth at the door  
 Close-barred, where hideth ever

The heart of the shrine. Yea, though he sack  
 man's life

Like a sacked city, and moveth evermore  
 Girt with calamity and strange ways of strife,  
 Him have we worshipped never !

There roamed a Steed in Oechalia's wild,  
 A Maid without yoke, without Master,  
 And Love she knew not, that far King's child :  
 But he came, he came, with a song in the night,  
 With fire, with blood ; and she strove in flight,  
 A Torrent Spirit, a Maenad white,  
 Faster and vainly faster,

Sealed unto Heracles by the Cyprian's Might.  
 Alas, thou Bride of Disaster !

O Mouth of Dirce, O god-built wall,  
 That Dirce's wells run under,  
 Ye know the Cyprian's fleet footfall !  
 Ye saw the heaven's around her flare,  
 When she lulled to her sleep that Mother fair  
 Of Twy-born Bacchus, and decked her there  
 The Bride of the bladed Thunder.

For her breath is on all that hath life, and she floats in  
 the air,  
 Bee-like, death-like, a wonder.

*[During the last lines PHAEDRA has approached  
 the door and is listening.]*

PHAEDRA.

Silence, ye Women ! Something is amiss.

LEADER.

How ? In the house ?—Phaedra, what fear is this ?

PHAEDRA.

Let me but listen ! There are voices. Hark !

LEADER.

I hold my peace : yet is thy presage dark.

PHAEDRA.

Oh, misery !

O God, that such a thing should fall on me !

LEADER.

What sound, what word,

O Woman, Friend, makes that sharp terror start  
Out at thy lips ? What ominous cry half-heard  
Hath leapt upon thine heart ?

PHAEDRA.

I am undone !—Bend to the door and hark,  
Hark what a tone sounds there, and sinks away !

LEADER.

Thou art beside the bars. 'Tis thine to mark  
The castle's floating message. Say, Oh, say  
What thing hath come to thee ?

PHAEDRA (*calmly*).

Why, what thing should it be ?  
The son of that proud Amazon speaks again  
In bitter wrath : speaks to my handmaiden !

LEADER.

I hear a noise of voices, nothing clear.

For thee the din hath words, as through barred locks  
Floating, at thy heart it knocks.

PHAEDRA.

“Pander of Sin” it says.—Now canst thou hear?—  
And there: “Betrayed of a master’s bed.”

LEADER.

Ah me, betrayed! Betrayed!  
Sweet Princess, thou art ill bested,  
Thy secret brought to light, and ruin near,  
By her thou heldest dear,  
By her that should have loved thee and obeyed!

PHAEDRA.

Aye, I am slain. She thought to help my fall  
With love instead of honour, and wrecked all.

LEADER.

Where wilt thou turn thee, where?  
And what help seek, O wounded to despair?

PHAEDRA.

I know not, save one thing, to die right soon.  
For such as me God keeps no other boon.

[*The door in the centre bursts open, and HIPPOLYTUS comes forth, closely followed by the NURSE. PHAEDRA cowers aside.*]

HIPPOLYTUS.

O Mother Earth, O Sun that makest clean,  
What poison have I heard, what speechless sin!



NURSE.

Hush, O my Prince, lest others mark, and guess . . .

HIPPOLYTUS.

I have heard horrors ! Shall I hold my peace ?

NURSE.

Yea, by this fair right arm, Son, by thy pledge . . .

HIPPOLYTUS.

Down with that hand ! Touch not my garment's  
edge !

NURSE.

Oh, by thy knees, be silent or I die !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Why, when thy speech was all so guiltless ? Why ?

NURSE.

It is not meet, fair Son, for every ear !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Good words can bravely forth, and have no fear.

NURSE.

Thine oath, thine oath ! I took thine oath before !

HIPPOLYTUS.

'Twas but my tongue, 'twas not my soul that swore.

NURSE.

O Son, what wilt thou ? Wilt thou slay thy kin ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

I own no kindred with the spawn of sin !

*[He flings her from him.]*

NURSE.

Nay, spare me ! Man was born to err ; oh, spare !

HIPPOLYTUS.

O God, why hast Thou made this gleaming snare,  
Woman, to dog us on the happy earth ?

Was it Thy will to make Man, why his birth

Through Love and Woman ? Could we not have rolled

Our store of prayer and offering, royal gold,

Silver and weight of bronze before Thy feet,

And bought of God new child-souls, as were meet

For each man's sacrifice, and dwelt in homes

Free, where nor Love nor Woman goes and comes ?

How, is that daughter not a bane confessed,

Whom her own sire sends forth—(He knows her  
best !)—

And, will some man but take her, pays a dower !

And he, poor fool, takes home the poison-flower ;

Laughs to hang jewels on the deadly thing

He joys in ; labours for her robe-wearing,

Till wealth and peace are dead. He smarts the less

In whose high seat is set a Nothingness,

A woman naught availing. Worst of all

The wise deep-thoughted ! Never in my hall

May she sit throned who thinks and waits and sighs !

For Cypris breeds most evil in the wise,

And least in her whose heart has naught within ;

For puny wit can work but puny sin.

Why do we let their handmaids pass the gate ?

Wild beasts were best, voiceless and fanged, to wait

About their rooms, that they might speak with none,  
 Nor ever hear one answering human tone !  
 But now dark women in still chambers lay  
 Plans that creep out into the light of day  
 On handmaids' lips— [Turning to the NURSE.

As thine accursèd head  
 Braved the high honour of my Father's bed,  
 And came to traffic. . . . Our white torrent's spray  
 Shall drench mine ears to wash those words away !  
 And couldst thou dream that I . . . ? I feel impure  
 Still at the very hearing ! Know for sure,  
 Woman, naught but mine honour saves ye both.  
 Hadst thou not trapped me with that guileful oath,  
 No power had held me secret till the King  
 Knew all ! But now, while he is journeying,  
 I too will go my ways and make no sound.  
 And when he comes again, I shall be found  
 Beside him, silent, watching with what grace  
 Thou and thy mistress greet him face to face !  
 Then shall I have the taste of it, and know  
 What woman's guile is.—Woe upon you, woe !  
 How can I too much hate you, while the ill  
 Ye work upon the world grows deadlier still ?  
 Too much ? Make woman pure, and wild Love tame,  
 Or let me cry for ever on their shame !

[*He goes off in fury to the left. PHAEDRA still  
 cowering in her place begins to sob.*

PHAEDRA.

Sad, sad and evil-starred  
 Is Woman's state.

What shelter now is left or guard ?  
 What spell to loose the iron knot of fate ?

And this thing, O my God,  
 O thou sweet Sunlight, is but my desert !  
 I cannot fly before the avenging rod  
     Falls, cannot hide my hurt.  
 What help, O ye who love me, can come near,  
     What god or man appear,  
 To aid a thing so evil and so lost ?  
 Lost, for this anguish presses, soon or late,  
 To that swift river that no life hath crossed.  
 No woman ever lived so desolate !

## LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Ah me, the time for deeds is gone ; the boast  
 Proved vain that spake thine handmaid ; and all lost !  
     [*At these words PHAEDRA suddenly remembers  
 the NURSE, who is cowering silently where  
 HIPPOLYTUS had thrown her from him. She  
 turns upon her.*

## PHAEDRA.

O wicked, wicked, wicked ! Murderess heart  
 To them that loved thee ! Hast thou played thy part ?  
 Am I enough trod down ?  
     May Zeus, my sire,  
 Blast and uproot thee ! Stab thee dead with fire !  
 Said I not—Knew I not thine heart ?—to name  
 To no one soul this that is now my shame ?  
 And thou couldst not be silent ! So no more  
 I die in honour. But enough ; a store  
 Of new words must be spoke and new things thought.  
 This man's whole being to one blade is wrought  
 Of rage against me. Even now he speeds  
 To abase me to the King with thy misdeeds ;

Tell Pittheus;—fill the land with talk of sin !  
 Cursèd be thou, and whoso else leaps in  
 To bring bad aid to friends that want it not.

[*The NURSE has raised herself, and faces  
 PHAEDRA, downcast but calm.*

NURSE.

Mistress, thou blamest me ; and all thy lot  
 So bitter sore is, and the sting so wild,  
 I bear with all. Yet, if I would, my Child,  
 I have mine answer, couldst thou hearken aught.

I nursed thee, and I love thee ; and I sought  
 Only some balm to heal thy deep despair,  
 And found—not what I sought for. Else I were  
 Wise, and thy friend, and good, had all sped right.  
 So fares it with us all in the world's sight.

PHAEDRA.

First stab me to the heart, then humour me  
 With words ! 'Tis fair ; 'tis all as it should be !

NURSE.

We talk too long, Child. I did ill ; but, oh,  
 There is a way to save thee, even so !

PHAEDRA.

A way ? No more ways ! One way hast thou trod  
 Already, foul and false and loathed of god !  
 Begone out of my sight ; and ponder how  
 Thine own life stands ! I need no helpers now.

[*She turns from the NURSE, who creeps abashed  
 away into the Castle.*

Only do ye, high Daughters of Trozén,  
 Let all ye hear be as it had not been ;  
 Know naught, and speak of naught ! 'Tis my last  
 prayer.

LEADER.

By God's pure daughter, Artemis, I swear,  
 No word will I of these thy griefs reveal !

PHAEDRA.

'Tis well. But now, yea, even while I reel  
 And falter, one poor hope, as hope now is,  
 I clutch at in this coil of miseries ;  
 To save some honour for my children's sake ;  
 Yea, for myself some fragment, though things break  
 In ruin around me. Nay, I will not shame  
 The old proud Cretan castle whence I came,  
 I will not cower before King Theseus' eyes,  
 Abased, for want of one life's sacrifice !

LEADER.

What wilt thou ? Some dire deed beyond recall ?

PHAEDRA (*musings*).

Die ; but how die ?

LEADER.

Let not such wild words fall !

PHAEDRA (*turning upon her*).

Give thou not such light counsel ! Let me be  
 To sate the Cyprian that is murdering me !  
 To-day shall be her day ; and, all strife past,  
 Her bitter Love shall quell me at the last.

Yet, dying, shall I die another's bane !  
 He shall not stand so proud where I have lain  
 Bent in the dust ! Oh, he shall stoop to share  
 The life I live in, and learn mercy there !

*[She goes off wildly into the Castle.]*

CHORUS.

Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,  
 In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod ;  
 Or a cloud make the home of mine abiding,  
 As a bird among the bird-droves of God !  
 Could I wing me to my rest amid the roar  
 Of the deep Adriatic on the shore,  
 Where the waters of Eridanus are clear,  
 And Phaëthon's sad sisters by his grave  
 Weep into the river, and each tear  
 Gleams, a drop of amber, in the wave.

To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,  
 The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold ;  
 Where the mariner must stay him from his onset,  
 And the red wave is tranquil as of old ;  
 Yea, beyond that Pillar of the End  
 That Atlas guardeth, would I wend ;  
 Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth  
 In God's quiet garden by the sea,  
 And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth  
 Joy among the meadows, like a tree.

---

O shallop of Crete, whose milk-white wing  
 Through the swell and the storm-beating,

Bore us thy Prince's daughter,  
Was it well she came from a joyous home  
To a far King's bridal across the foam ?

What joy hath her bridal brought her ?  
Sure some spell upon either hand  
Flew with thee from the Cretan strand,  
Seeking Athena's tower divine ;  
And there, where Munychus fronts the brine,  
Crept by the shore-flung cables' line,  
The curse from the Cretan water !

And, for that dark spell that about her clings,  
Sick desires of forbidden things

The soul of her rend and sever ;  
The bitter tide of calamity  
Hath risen above her lips ; and she,

Where bends she her last endeavour ?  
She will hie her alone to her bridal room,  
And a rope swing slow in the rafters' gloom ;  
And a fair white neck shall creep to the noose,  
A-shudder with dread, yet firm to choose  
The one strait way for fame, and lose  
The Love and the pain for ever.

*[The Voice of the NURSE is heard from within,  
crying, at first inarticulately, then clearly.]*

#### VOICE.

Help ho ! The Queen ! Help, whoso hearkeneth !  
Help ! Theseus' spouse caught in a noose of death !

#### A WOMAN.

God, is it so soon finished ? That bright head  
Swinging beneath the rafters ! Phaedra dead !



VOICE.

O haste ! This knot about her throat is made  
So fast ! Will no one bring me a swift blade ?

A WOMAN.

Say, friends, what think ye ? Should we haste within,  
And from her own hand's knotting loose the Queen ?

ANOTHER.

Nay, are there not men there ? 'Tis an ill road  
In life, to finger at another's load.

VOICE.

Let it lie straight ! Alas ! the cold white thing  
That guards his empty castle for the King !

A WOMAN.

Ah ! 'Let it lie straight !' Heard ye what she said ?  
No need for helpers now ; the Queen is dead !

*[The Women, intent upon the voices from the Castle, have not noticed the approach of THESEUS. He enters from the left ; his dress and the garland on his head show that he has returned from some oracle or special abode of a God. He stands for a moment perplexed.]*

THESEUS.

Ho, Women, and what means this loud acclaim  
Within the house ? The vassals' outcry came  
To smite mine ears far off. It were more meet  
To fling out wide the Castle gates, and greet

With joy a herald from God's Presence !

*[The confusion and horror of the Women's faces gradually affects him. A dirge-cry comes from the Castle.]*

How ?

Not Pittheus ? Hath Time struck that hoary brow ?  
Old is he, old, I know. But sore it were,  
Returning thus, to find his empty chair !

*[The Women hesitate ; then the Leader comes forward.]*

LEADER.

O Theseus, not on any old man's head  
This stroke falls. Young and tender is the dead.

THESEUS.

Ye Gods ! One of my children torn from me ?

LEADER.

Thy motherless children live, most grievously.

THESEUS.

How sayst thou ? What ? My wife ? . . .

Say how she died.

LEADER.

In a high death-knot that her own hands tied.

THESEUS.

A fit of the old cold anguish—Tell me all—  
That held her ? Or did some fresh thing befall ?

LEADER.

We know no more. But now arrived we be,  
Theseus, to mourn for thy calamity.

*[THESEUS stays for a moment silent, and puts his hand to his brow. He notices the wreath.]*

## THESEUS.

What? And all garlanded I come to her  
With flowers, most evil-starred God's-messenger!

Ho, varlets, loose the portal bars; undo  
The bolts; and let me see the bitter view  
Of her whose death hath brought me to mine own.

*[The great central door of the Castle is thrown  
open wide, and the body of PHAEDRA is seen  
lying on a bier, surrounded by a group of  
Handmaids, wailing.]*

## THE HANDMAIDS.

Ah me, what thou hast suffered and hast done:

A deed to wrap this roof in flame!

Why was thine hand so strong, thine heart so bold?

Wherefore, O dead in anger, dead in shame,

The long, long wrestling ere thy breath was cold?

O ill-starred Wife,

What brought this blackness over all thy life?

*[A throng of Men and Women has gradually  
collected.]*

## THESEUS.

Ah me, this is the last

—Hear, O my countrymen!—and bitterest

Of Theseus' labours! Fortune all unblest,

How hath thine heavy heel across me passed!

Is it the stain of sins done long ago,

Some fell God still remembereth,

That must so dim and fret my life with death?

I cannot win to shore; and the waves flow

Above mine eyes, to be surmounted not.  
 Ah wife, sweet wife, what name  
 Can fit thine heavy lot?  
 Gone like a wild bird, like a blowing flame,  
 In one swift gust, where all things are forgot!  
 Alas! this misery!  
 Sure 'tis some stroke of God's great anger rolled  
 From age to age on me,  
 For some dire sin wrought by dim kings of old.

## LEADER.

Sire, this great grief hath come to many an one,  
 A true wife lost. Thou art not all alone.

## THESEUS.

Deep, deep beneath the Earth,  
 Dark may my dwelling be,  
 And Night my heart's one comrade, in the dearth,  
 O Love, of thy most sweet society.  
 This is my death, O Phaedra, more than thine.

*[He turns suddenly on the Attendants.]*

Speak who speak can? What was it? What malign  
 Swift stroke, O heart discourselled, leapt on thee?

*[He bends over PHAEDRA; then, as no one speaks,  
 looks fiercely up.]*

What, will ye speak? Or are they dumb as death,  
 This herd of thralls, my high house harboureth?

*[There is no answer. He bends again over  
 PHAEDRA.]*

Ah me, why shouldst thou die?  
 A wide and royal grief I here behold,  
 Not to be borne in peace, not to be told.  
 As a lost man am I,

My children motherless and my house undone,  
 Since thou art vanished quite,  
 Purest of hearts that e'er the wandering Sun  
 Touched, or the star-eyed splendour of the Night.

*[He throws himself beside the body.]*

CHORUS.

Unhappy one, O most unhappy one ;  
 With what strange evil is this Castle vexed !  
 Mine eyes are molten with the tears that run  
 For thee and thine ; but what thing follows next ?  
 I tremble when I think thereon !

*[They have noticed that there is a tablet with  
 writing fastened to the dead woman's wrist.]*

THESEUS also sees it.

THESEUS.

Ha, what is this that hangs from her dear hand ?  
 A tablet ! It would make me understand  
 Some dying wish, some charge about her bed  
 And children. 'Twas the last prayer, ere her head  
 Was bowed for ever. *[Taking the tablet.]*

Fear not, my lost bride,  
 No woman born shall lie at Theseus' side,  
 Nor rule in Theseus' house !

A seal ! Ah, see  
 How her gold signet here looks up at me,  
 Trustfully. Let me tear this thread away,  
 And read what tale the tablet seeks to say.

*[He proceeds to undo and read the tablet. The  
 Chorus breaks into horrified groups.]*

## SOME WOMEN.

Woe, woe ! God brings to birth  
 A new grief here, close on the other's tread !  
 My life hath lost its worth.  
 May all go now with what is finish'd !  
 The castle of my King is overthrown,  
 A house no more, a house vanished and gone !

## OTHER WOMEN.

O God, if it may be in any way,  
 Let not this house be wrecked ! Help us who pray !  
 I know not what is here : some unseen thing  
 That shows the Bird of Evil on the wing.

[THESEUS *has read the tablet and breaks out in uncontrollable emotion.*

## THESEUS.

Oh, horror piled on horror !—Here is writ . . .  
 Nay, who could bear it, who could speak of it ?

## LEADER.

What, O my King ? If I may hear it, speak !

## THESEUS.

Doth not the tablet cry aloud, yea, shriek,  
 Things not to be forgotten ?—Oh, to fly  
 And hide mine head ! No more a man am I.  
 Ah, God, what ghastly music echoes here !

## LEADER.

How wild thy voice ! Some terrible thing is near.

THESEUS.

No ; my lips' gates will hold it back no more ;  
 This deadly word,  
 That struggles on the brink and will not o'er,  
 Yet will not stay unheard.

*[He raises his hand, to make proclamation to all present.*

Ho, hearken all this land !

*[The people gather expectantly about him.*

Hippolytus by violence hath laid hand  
 On this my wife, forgetting God's great eye.

*[Murmurs of amazement and horror ; THESEUS,  
 apparently calm, raises both arms to heaven.*

Therefore, O Thou my Father, hear my cry,  
 Poseidon ! Thou didst grant me for mine own  
 Three prayers ; for one of these, slay now my son,  
 Hippolytus ; let him not outlive this day,  
 If true thy promise was ! Lo, thus I pray.

LEADER.

Oh, call that wild prayer back ! O King, take heed !  
 I know that thou wilt live to rue this deed.

THESEUS.

It may not be.—And more, I cast him out  
 From all my realms. He shall be held about  
 By two great dooms. Or by Poseidon's breath  
 He shall fall swiftly to the house of Death ;  
 Or wandering, outcast, o'er strange land and sea  
 Shall live and drain the cup of misery.

LEADER.

Ah, see ! here comes he at the point of need.  
 Shake off that evil mood, O King : have heed

For all thine house and folk.—Great Theseus, hear !  
 [THESEUS stands silent in fierce gloom. HIPPOLYTUS comes in from the right.]

## HIPPOLYTUS.

Father, I heard thy cry, and sped in fear  
 To help thee.—But I see not yet the cause  
 That racked thee so.—Say, Father, what it was.

[The murmurs in the crowd, the silent gloom of his Father, and the horror of the Chorus-women gradually work on HIPPOLYTUS and bewilder him. He catches sight of the bier.]

Ah, what is that ! Nay, Father, not the Queen  
 Dead ! (*Murmurs in the crowd.*)

'Tis most strange. 'Tis passing strange, I ween.  
 'Twas here I left her. Scarce an hour hath run  
 Since here she stood and looked on this same sun.  
 What is it with her ? Wherefore did she die ?

[THESEUS remains silent. The murmurs increase.]

Father, to thee I speak. Oh, tell me, why,  
 Why art thou silent ? What doth silence know  
 Of skill to stem the bitter flood of woe ?  
 And human hearts in sorrow crave the more  
 For knowledge, though the knowledge grieve them sore.  
 It is not love, to veil thy sorrows in  
 From one most near to thee, and more than kin

THESEUS (*to himself*).

Fond race of men, so striving and so blind,  
 Ten thousand arts and wisdoms can ye find,  
 Desiring all and all imagining :  
 But ne'er have reached nor understood one thing,  
 To make a true heart there where no heart is !



## HIPPOLYTUS.

That were indeed beyond man's mysteries,  
 To make a false heart true against his will.  
 But why this subtle talk? It likes me ill,  
 Father; thy speech runs wild beneath this blow.

THESEUS (*as before*).

O would that God had given us here below  
 Some test of love, some sifting of the soul,  
 To tell the false and true! Or through the whole  
 Of men two voices ran, one true and right,  
 The other as chance willed it; that we might  
 Convict the liar by the true man's tone,  
 And not live duped forever, every one!

HIPPOLYTUS (*misunderstanding him; then guessing at something of the truth*).

What? Hath some friend proved false?  
Or in thine ear
 Whispered some slander? Stand I tainted here,  
 Though utterly innocent? [*Murmurs from the crowd.*  
Yea, dazed am I;
 'Tis thy words daze me, falling all awry,  
 Away from reason, by fell fancies vexed!

## THESEUS.

O heart of man, what height wilt venture next?  
 What end comes to thy daring and thy crime?  
 For if with each man's life 'twill higher climb,  
 And every age break out in blood and lies  
 Beyond its fathers, must not God devise  
 Some new world far from ours, to hold therein  
 Such brood of all unfaithfulness and sin?

Look, all, upon this man, my son, his life  
Sprung forth from mine! He hath defiled my  
wife;

And standeth here convicted by the dead,  
A most black villain!

[HIPPOLYTUS *falls back with a cry and covers his  
face with his robe.*

Nay, hide not thine head!  
Pollution, is it? Thee it will not stain.

Look up, and face thy Father's eyes again!

Thou friend of Gods, of all mankind elect;  
Thou the pure heart, by thoughts of ill unflecked!  
I care not for thy boasts. I am not mad,  
To deem that Gods love best the base and bad.

Now is thy day! Now vaunt thee; thou so pure,  
No flesh of life may pass thy lips! Now lure  
Fools after thee; call Orpheus King and Lord;  
Make ecstasies and wonders! Thumb thine hoard  
Of ancient scrolls and ghostly mysteries—  
Now thou art caught and known!

Shun men like these,  
I charge ye all! With solemn words they chase  
Their prey, and in their hearts plot foul disgrace.

My wife is dead.—'Ha, so that saves thee now?'  
That is what grips thee worst, thou caitiff, thou!  
What oaths, what subtle words, shall stronger be  
Than this dead hand, to clear the guilt from thee?

'She hated thee,' thou sayest; 'the bastard born  
Is ever sore and bitter as a thorn  
To the true brood.'—A sorry bargainer  
In the ills and goods of life thou makest her,  
If all her best-beloved she cast away  
To wreak blind hate on thee!—What, wilt thou say,

'Through every woman's nature one blind strand  
Of passion winds, that men scarce understand?'—  
Are we so different? Know I not the fire  
And perilous flood of a young man's desire,  
Desperate as any woman, and as blind,  
When Cypris stings? Save that the man behind  
Has all men's strength to aid him. Nay, 'twas thou. . .

But what avail to wrangle with thee now,  
When the dead speaks for all to understand,  
A perfect witness!

Hie thee from this land  
To exile with all speed. Come never more  
To god-built Athens, not to the utmost shore  
Of any realm where Theseus' arm is strong!  
What? Shall I bow my head beneath this wrong,  
And cower to thee? Not Isthmian Sinis so  
Will bear men witness that I laid him low,  
Nor Skiron's rocks, that share the salt sea's prey,  
Grant that my hand hath weight vile things to slay!

## LEADER.

Alas! whom shall I call of mortal men  
Happy? The highest are cast down again.

## HIPPOLYTUS.

Father, the hot strained fury of thy heart  
Is terrible. Yet, albeit so swift thou art  
Of speech, if all this matter were laid bare,  
Speech were not then so swift; nay, nor so fair. . .

*[Murmurs again in the crowd.]*

I have no skill before a crowd to tell  
My thoughts. 'Twere best with few, that know me  
well.—

Nay, that is natural ; tongues that sound but rude  
 In wise men's ears, speak to the multitude  
 With music.

None the less, since there is come  
 This stroke upon me, I must not be dumb,  
 But speak perforce. . . . And there will I begin  
 Where thou beganst, as though to strip my sin  
 Naked, and I not speak a word !

Dost see  
 This sunlight and this earth ? I swear to thee  
 There dwelleth not in these one man—deny  
 All that thou wilt !—more pure of sin than I.

Two things I know on earth : God's worship first ;  
 Next to win friends about me, few, that thirst  
 To hold them clean of all unrighteousness.  
 Our rule doth curse the tempters, and no less  
 Who yieldeth to the tempters.—How, thou say'st,  
 'Dupes that I jest at ?' Nay ; I make a jest  
 Of no man. I am honest to the end,  
 Near or far off, with him I call my friend.  
 And most in that one thing, where now thy mesh  
 Would grip me, stainless quite ! No woman's flesh  
 Hath e'er this body touched. Of all such deed  
 Naught wot I, save what things a man may read  
 In pictures or hear spoke ; nor am I fain,  
 Being virgin-souled, to read or hear again.

My life of innocence moves thee not ; so be it.  
 Show then what hath seduced me ; let me see it.  
 Was that poor flesh so passing fair, beyond  
 All women's loveliness ?

Was I some fond  
 False plotter, that I schemed to win through her  
 Thy castle's heirdom ? Fond indeed I were !

Nay, a stark madman ! ‘But a crown,’ thou sayst,  
 ‘Usurped, is sweet.’ Nay, rather most unblest  
 To all wise-hearted ; sweet to fools and them  
 Whose eyes are blinded by the diadem.  
 In contests of all valour fain would I  
 Lead Hellas ; but in rank and majesty  
 Not lead, but be at ease, with good men near  
 To love me, free to work and not to fear.  
 That brings more joy than any crown or throne.

*[He sees from the demeanour of THESEUS and of the crowd that his words are not winning them, but rather making them bitterer than before. It comes to his lips to speak the whole truth.]*

I have said my say ; save one thing . . . one alone.

O had I here some witness in my need,  
 As I was witness ! Could she hear me plead,  
 Face me and face the sunlight ; well I know,  
 Our deeds would search us out for thee, and show  
 Who lies !

But now, I swear—so hear me both,  
 The Earth beneath and Zeus who Guards the  
 Oath—

I never touched this woman that was thine !  
 No words could win me to it, nor incline  
 My heart to dream it. May God strike me down,  
 Nameless and fameless, without home or town,  
 An outcast and a wanderer of the world ;  
 May my dead bones rest never, but be hurled  
 From sea to land, from land to angry sea,  
 If evil is my heart and false to thee !

*[He waits a moment ; but sees that his Father is unmoved. The truth again comes to his lips.]*

If 'twas some fear that made her cast away  
 Her life . . . I know not. More I must not say.  
 Right hath she done when in her was no right ;  
 And Right I follow to mine own despite !

## LEADER.

It is enough ! God's name is witness large,  
 And thy great oath, to assoil thee of this charge.

## THESEUS.

Is not the man a juggler and a mage,  
 Cool wits and one right oath — what more ? — to  
     assuage  
 Sin and the wrath of injured fatherhood !

## HIPPOLYTUS.

Am I so cool ? Nay, Father, 'tis thy mood  
 That makes me marvel ! By my faith, wert thou  
 The son, and I the sire ; and deemed I now  
 In very truth thou hadst my wife assailed,  
 I had not exiled thee, nor stood and railed,  
 But lifted once mine arm, and struck thee dead !

## THESEUS.

Thou gentle judge ! Thou shalt not so be sped  
 To simple death, nor by thine own decree.  
 Swift death is bliss to men in misery.  
 Far off, friendless forever, thou shalt drain  
 Amid strange cities the last dregs of pain !

## HIPPOLYTUS.

Wilt verily cast me now beyond thy pale,  
 Not wait for Time, the lifter of the veil ?

THESEUS.

Aye, if I could, past Pontus, and the red  
Atlantic marge ! So do I hate thine head.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Wilt weigh nor oath nor faith nor prophet's word  
To prove me ? Drive me from thy sight unheard ?

THESEUS.

This tablet here, that needs no prophet's lot  
To speak from, tells me all. I ponder not  
Thy fowls that fly above us ! Let them fly.

HIPPOLYTUS.

O ye great Gods, wherefore unlock not I  
My lips, ere yet ye have slain me utterly,  
Ye whom I love most ? No. It may not be !  
The one heart that I need I ne'er should gain  
To trust me. I should break mine oath in vain.

THESEUS.

Death ! but he chokes me with his saintly tone !—  
Up, get thee from this land ! Begone ! Begone !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Where shall I turn me ? Think. To what friend's  
door  
Betake me, banished on a charge so sore ?

THESEUS.

Whoso delights to welcome to his hall  
Vile ravishers . . . to guard his hearth withal !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Thou seekst my heart, my tears? Aye, let it be  
Thus! I am vile to all men, and to thee!

THESEUS.

There was a time for tears and thought; the time  
Ere thou didst up and gird thee to thy crime.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ye stones, will ye not speak? Ye castle walls!  
Bear witness if I be so vile, so false!

THESEUS.

Aye, fly to voiceless witnesses! Yet here  
A dumb deed speaks against thee, and speaks clear!

HIPPOLYTUS.

Alas!  
Would I could stand and watch this thing, and see  
My face, and weep for very pity of me!

THESEUS.

Full of thyself, as ever! Not a thought  
For them that gave thee birth; nay, they are naught!

HIPPOLYTUS.

O my wronged Mother! O my birth of shame!  
May none I love e'er bear a bastard's name!

THESEUS (*in a sudden blaze of rage*).

Up, thralls, and drag him from my presence! What?  
'Tis but a foreign felon! Heard ye not?

[*The thralls still hesitate in spite of his fury.*]





Ne'er shall ye see a man more pure of spot  
Than me, though mine own Father loves me not !

[HIPPOLYTUS goes away to the right, followed by many Huntsmen and other young men. The rest of the crowd has by this time dispersed, except the Women of the Chorus and some Men of the Chorus of Huntsmen.]

CHORUS.

*Men.*

Surely the thought of the Gods hath balm in it alway,  
to win me

Far from my griefs ; and a thought, deep in the  
dark of my mind,

Clings to a great Understanding. Yet all the spirit  
within me

Faints, when I watch men's deeds matched with  
the guerdon they find.

For Good comes in Evil's traces,  
And the Evil the Good replaces ;  
And Life, 'mid the changing faces,  
Wandereth weak and blind.

*Women.*

What wilt thou grant me, O God ? Lo, this is the  
prayer of my travail—

Some well-being ; and chance not very bitter  
thereby ;

A Spirit uncrippled by pain ; and a mind not deep to  
unravel

Truth unseen, nor yet dark with the brand of  
a lie.

With a veering mood to borrow  
 Its light from every morrow,  
 Fair friends and no deep sorrow,  
 Well could man live and die !

*Men.*

Yet my spirit is no more clean,  
 And the web of my hope is torn,  
 For the deed of wrong that mine eyes  
 have seen,  
 The lie and the rage and the scorn ;  
 A Star among men, yea, a Star  
 That in Hellas was bright,  
 By a Father's wrath driven far  
 To the wilds and the night.  
 Oh, alas for the sands of the shore !  
 Alas for the brakes of the hill,  
 Where the wolves shall fear thee no more,  
 And thy cry to Dictynna is still !

*Women.*

No more in the yoke of thy car  
 Shall the colts of Enetia fleet ;  
 Nor Limna's echoes quiver afar  
 To the clatter of galloping feet.  
 The sleepless music of old,  
 That leaped in the lyre,  
 Ceaseth now, and is cold,  
 In the halls of thy sire.  
 The bowers are discrowned and unladen  
 Where Artemis lay on the lea ;  
 And the love-dream of many a maiden  
 Lost, in the losing of thee

*A Maiden.*

And I, even I,  
 For thy fall, O Friend,  
 Amid tears and tears,  
 Endure to the end  
 Of the empty years,  
 Of a life run dry.  
 In vain didst thou bear him,  
 Thou Mother forlorn !  
 Ye Gods that did snare him,  
 Lo, I cast in your faces  
 My hate and my scorn !  
 Ye love-linkèd Graces,  
 (Alas for the day !)  
 Was he naught, then, to you,  
 That ye cast him away,  
 The stainless and true,  
 From the old happy places ?

## LEADER.

Look yonder ! Surely from the Prince 'tis one  
 That cometh, full of haste and woe-begone.

[A HENCHMAN enters in haste.

## HENCHMAN.

Ye women, whither shall I go to seek  
 King Theseus ? Is he in this dwelling ? Speak !

## LEADER.

Lo, where he cometh through the Castle gate !

[THESEUS comes out from the Castle.

HENCHMAN.

O King, I bear thee tidings of dire weight  
To thee, aye, and to every man, I ween,  
From Athens to the marches of Trozên.

THESEUS.

What? Some new stroke hath touched, unknown to me,  
The sister cities of my sovranty?

HENCHMAN.

Hippolytus is . . . Nay, not dead; but stark  
Outstretched, a hairsbreadth this side of the dark.

THESEUS (*as though unmoved*).

How slain? Was there some other man, whose wife  
He had like mine defiled, that sought his life?

HENCHMAN.

His own wild team destroyed him, and the dire  
Curse of thy lips.

The boon of thy great Sire  
Is granted thee, O King, and thy son slain.

THESEUS.

Ye Gods! And thou, Poseidon! Not in vain  
I called thee Father; thou hast heard my prayer!

How did he die? Speak on. How closed the snare  
Of Heaven to slay the shamer of my blood?

HENCHMAN.

'Twas by the bank of beating sea we stood,  
We thralls, and decked the steeds, and combed each  
mane;

Weeping ; for word had come that ne'er again  
The foot of our Hippolytus should roam  
This land, but waste in exile by thy doom.

So stood we till he came, and in his tone  
No music now save sorrow's, like our own,  
And in his train a concourse without end  
Of many a chase-fellow and many a friend.  
At last he brushed his sobs away, and spake :  
'Why this fond loitering ? I would not break  
My Father's law.—Ho, there ! My coursers four  
And chariot, quick ! This land is mine no more.'

Thereat, be sure, each man of us made speed.  
Swifter than speech we brought them up, each steed  
Well dight and shining, at our Prince's side.  
He grasped the reins upon the rail : one stride  
And there he stood, a perfect charioteer,  
Each foot in its own station set. Then clear  
His voice rose, and his arms to heaven were spread :  
'O Zeus, if I be false, strike thou me dead !  
But, dead or living, let my Father see  
One day, how falsely he hath hated me !'

Even as he spake, he lifted up the goad  
And smote ; and the steeds sprang. And down the  
road

We henchmen followed, hard beside the rein,  
Each hand, to speed him, toward the Argive plain  
And Epidaurus.

So we made our way  
Up toward the desert region, where the bay  
Curls to a promontory near the verge  
Of our Trozên, facing the southward surge  
Of Saron's gulf. Just there an angry sound,  
Slow-swelling, like God's thunder underground,

Broke on us, and we trembled. And the steeds  
Pricked their ears skyward, and threw back their heads.  
And wonder came on all men, and affright,  
Whence rose that awful voice. And swift our sight  
Turned seaward, down the salt and roaring sand.

And there, above the horizon, seemed to stand  
A wave unearthly, crested in the sky ;  
Till Skiron's Cape first vanished from mine eye,  
Then sank the Isthmus hidden, then the rock  
Of Epidaurus. Then it broke, one shock  
And roar of gasping sea and spray flung far,  
And shoreward swept, where stood the Prince's car.

Three lines of wave together raced, and, full  
In the white crest of them, a wild Sea-Bull  
Flung to the shore, a fell and marvellous Thing.  
The whole land held his voice, and answering  
Roared in each echo. And all we, gazing there,  
Gazed seeing not ; 'twas more than eyes could bear.

Then straight upon the team wild terror fell.  
Howbeit, the Prince, cool-eyed and knowing well  
Each changing mood a horse has, gripped the reins  
Hard in both hands ; then as an oarsman strains  
Up from his bench, so strained he on the thong,  
Back in the chariot swinging. But the young  
Wild steeds bit hard the curb, and fled afar ;  
Nor rein nor guiding hand nor morticed car  
Stayed them at all. For when he veered them round,  
And aimed their flying feet to grassy ground,  
In front uprose that Thing, and turned again  
The four great coursers, terror-mad. But when  
Their blind rage drove them toward the rocky places,  
Silent, and ever nearer to the traces,  
It followed, rockward, till one wheel-edge grazed.

The chariot tript and flew, and all was mazed  
 In turmoil. Up went wheel-box with a din,  
 Where the rock jagged, and nave and axle-pin.  
 And there—the long reins round him—there was he  
 Dragging, entangled irretrievably.

A dear head battering at the chariot side,  
 Sharp rocks, and ripped flesh, and a voice that cried :  
 ‘Stay, stay, O ye who fattened at my stalls,  
 Dash me not into nothing !—O thou false  
 Curse of my Father !—Help ! Help, whoso can,  
 An innocent, innocent and stainless man !’

Many there were that laboured then, I wot,  
 To bear him succour, but could reach him not,  
 Till—who knows how ?—at last the tangled rein  
 Unclasped him, and he fell, some little vein  
 Of life still pulsing in him.

All beside,

The steeds, the hornèd Horror of the Tide,  
 Had vanished—who knows where ?—in that wild land

O King, I am a bondsman of thine hand ;  
 Yet love nor fear nor duty me shall win  
 To say thine innocent son hath died in sin.  
 All women born may hang themselves, for me,  
 And swing their dying words from every tree  
 On Ida ! For I know that he was true !

LEADER.

O God, so cometh new disaster, new  
 Despair ! And no escape from what must be !

THESEUS.

Hate of the man thus stricken lifted me  
 At first to joy at hearing of thy tale ;  
 But now, some shame before the Gods, some pale



Pity for mine own blood, hath o'er me come.  
I laugh not, neither weep, at this fell doom.

HENCHMAN.

How then? Behoves it bear him here, or how  
Best do thy pleasure?—Speak, Lord. Yet if thou  
Wilt mark at all my word, thou wilt not be  
Fierce-hearted to thy child in misery.

THESEUS.

Aye, bring him hither. Let me see the face  
Of him who durst deny my deep disgrace  
And his own sin; yea, speak with him, and prove  
His clear guilt by God's judgments from above.

*[The HENCHMAN departs to fetch HIPPOLYTUS ;  
THESEUS sits waiting in stern gloom, while  
the CHORUS sing. At the close of their song a  
Divine Figure is seen approaching on a cloud  
in the air and the voice of ARTEMIS speaks.]*

CHORUS.

Thou comest to bend the pride  
Of the hearts of God and man,  
Cypris; and by thy side,  
In earth-encircling span,  
He of the changing plumes,  
The Wing that the world illumes,  
As over the leagues of land flies he,  
Over the salt and sounding sea.

For mad is the heart of Love,  
And gold the gleam of his wing;  
And all to the spell thereof  
Bend, when he makes his spring;

All life that is wild and young  
 In mountain and wave and stream,  
 All that of earth is sprung,  
 Or breathes in the red sunbeam ;  
 Yea, and Mankind. O'er all a royal throne,  
 Cyprian, Cyprian, is thine alone !

A VOICE FROM THE CLOUD.

O thou that rulest in Aegeus' Hall,  
 I charge thee, hearken !

Yea, it is I,

Artemis, Virgin of God most High.  
 Thou bitter King, art thou glad withal  
 For thy murdered son ?  
 For thine ear bent low to a lying Queen,  
 For thine heart so swift amid things unseen ?  
 Lo, all may see what end thou hast won !  
 Go, sink thine head in the waste abyss ;  
 Or aloft to another world than this,  
 Birdwise with wings,  
 Fly far to thine hiding,  
 Far over this blood that clots and clings ;  
 For in righteous men and in holy things  
 No rest is thine nor abiding !

*[The cloud has become stationary in the air.]*

Hear, Theseus, all the story of thy grief !  
 Verily, I bring but anguish, not relief ;  
 Yet, 'twas for this I came, to show how high  
 And clean was thy son's heart, that he may die  
 Honoured of men ; aye, and to tell no less  
 The frenzy, or in some sort the nobleness,

Of thy dead wife. One Spirit there is, whom we  
 That know the joy of white virginity,  
 Most hate in heaven. She sent her fire to run  
 In Phaedra's veins, so that she loved thy son.  
 Yet strove she long with love, and in the stress  
 Fell not, till by her Nurse's craftiness  
 Betrayed, who stole, with oaths of secrecy,  
 To entreat thy son. And he, most righteously,  
 Nor did her will, nor, when thy railing scorn  
 Beat on him, broke the oath that he had sworn,  
 For God's sake. And thy Phaedra, panic-eyed,  
 Wrote a false writ, and slew thy son, and died,  
 Lying; but thou wast nimble to believe!

[THESEUS, at first bewildered, then dumbfounded,  
 now utters a deep groan.]

It stings thee, Theseus?—Nay, hear on, and grieve  
 Yet sorer. Wottest thou three prayers were thine  
 Of sure fulfilment, from thy Sire divine?  
 Hast thou no foes about thee, then, that one—  
 Thou vile King!—must be turned against thy  
 son?

The deed was thine. Thy Sea-born Sire but heard  
 The call of prayer, and bowed him to his word.  
 But thou in his eyes and in mine art found  
 Evil, who wouldst not think, nor probe, nor sound  
 The deeps of prophet's lore, nor day by day  
 Leave Time to search; but, swifter than man  
 may,  
 Let loose the curse to slay thine innocent son!

THESEUS.

O Goddess, let me die!

## ARTEMIS.

Nay ; thou hast done

A heavy wrong ; yet even beyond this ill  
 Abides for thee forgiveness. 'Twas the will  
 Of Cypris that these evil things should be,  
 Sating her wrath. And this immutably  
 Hath Zeus ordained in heaven : no God may thwart  
 A God's fixed will ; we grieve but stand apart.  
 Else, but for fear of the Great Father's blame,  
 Never had I to such extreme of shame  
 Bowed me, be sure, as here to stand and see  
 Slain him I loved best of mortality !

Thy fault, O King, its ignorance sunders wide  
 From very wickedness ; and she who died  
 By death the more disarmed thee, making dumb  
 The voice of question. And the storm has come  
 Most bitterly of all on thee ! Yet I  
 Have mine own sorrow, too. When good men die,  
 There is no joy in heaven, albeit our ire  
 On child and house of the evil falls like fire.

*[A throng is seen approaching ; HIPPOLYTUS enters,  
 supported by his attendants.]*

## CHORUS.

Lo, it is he ! The bright young head  
 Yet upright there !  
 Ah, the torn flesh and the blood-stained hair ;  
 Alas for the kindred's trouble !  
 It falls as fire from a God's hand sped,  
 Two deaths, and mourning double.

## HIPPOLYTUS.

Ah, pain, pain, pain !  
 O unrighteous curse ! O unrighteous sire !  
 No hope.—My head is stabbed with fire,  
 And a leaping spasm about my brain.

Stay, let me rest. I can no more.  
 O fell, fell steeds that my own hand fed,  
 Have ye maimed me and slain, that loved me of yore ?  
 —Soft there, ye thralls ! No trembling hands  
 As ye lift me, now !—Who is that that stands  
 At the right ?—Now firm, and with measured tread,  
 Lift one accurs'd and stricken sore  
     By a father's sinning.

Thou, Zeus, dost see me ? Yea, it is I ;  
 The proud and pure, the server of God,  
 The white and shining in sanctity !  
 To a visible death, to an open sod,  
     I walk my ways ;  
 And all the labour of saintly days  
     Lost, lost, without meaning !

Ah God, it crawls  
     This agony, over me !  
 Let be, ye thralls !  
     Come, Death, and cover me ;  
 Come, O thou Healer blest !

But a little more,  
     And my soul is clear,  
 And the anguish o'er !  
     Oh, a spear, a spear !  
 To rend my soul to its rest !

Oh, strange, false Curse ! Was there some blood-  
 stained head,  
 Some father of my line, unpunished,  
 Whose guilt lived in his kin,  
 And passed, and slept, till after this long day  
 It lights. . . . Oh, why on me ? Me, far away  
 And innocent of sin ?

O words that cannot save !

When will this breathing end in that last deep  
 Pain that is painlessness ? 'Tis sleep I crave.

When wilt thou bring me sleep,  
 Thou dark and midnight magic of the grave !

ARTEMIS.

Sore-stricken man, bethink thee in this stress,  
 Thou dost but die for thine own nobleness.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ah !

O breath of heavenly fragrance ! Though my pain  
 Burns, I can feel thee and find rest again.  
 The Goddess Artemis is with me here.

ARTEMIS.

With thee and loving thee, poor sufferer !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Dost see me, Mistress, nearing my last sleep ?

ARTEMIS.

Aye, and would weep for thee, if Gods could weep.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Who now shall hunt with thee or hold thy quiver ?

ARTEMIS.

He dies ; but my love cleaves to him for ever.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Who guide thy chariot, keep thy shrine-flowers fresh !

ARTEMIS.

The accursèd Cyprian caught him in her mesh !

HIPPOLYTUS.

The Cyprian ? Now I see it !—Aye, 'twas she.

ARTEMIS.

She missed her worship, loathed thy chastity !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Three lives by her one hand ! 'Tis all clear now.

ARTEMIS.

Yea, three ; thy father and his Queen and thou.

HIPPOLYTUS.

My father ; yea, he too is pitiable !

ARTEMIS.

A plotting Goddess tripped him, and he fell.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Father, where art thou ? . . . Oh, thou sufferest sore !

THESEUS.

Even unto death, child. There is joy no more.

HIPPOLYTUS.

I pity thee in this coil ; aye, more than me.

THESEUS.

Would I could lie there dead instead of thee !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Oh, bitter bounty of Poseidon's love !

THESEUS.

Would God my lips had never breathed thereof !

HIPPOLYTUS (*gently*).

Nay, thine own rage had slain me then, some wise !

THESEUS.

A lying spirit had made blind mine eyes !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ah me !

Would that a mortal's curse could reach to God !

ARTEMIS.

Let be ! For not, though deep beneath the sod  
Thou liest, not unrequited nor unsung  
Shall this fell stroke, from Cypris' rancour sprung,  
Quell thee, mine own, the saintly and the true !

My hand shall win its vengeance, through and  
through

Piercing with flawless shaft what heart soe'er  
Of all men living is most dear to Her.

Yea, and to thee, for this sore travail's sake,  
Honours most high in Trozên will I make ;  
For yokeless maids before their bridal night  
Shall shear for thee their tresses ; and a rite  
Of honouring tears be thine in ceaseless store ;



And virgins' thoughts in music evermore  
Turn toward thee, and praise thee in the Song  
Of Phaedra's far-famed love and thy great wrong.

O seed of ancient Aegeus, bend thee now  
And clasp thy son. Aye, hold and fear not thou !  
Not knowingly hast thou slain him ; and man's way,  
When Gods send error, needs must fall astray.

And thou, Hippolytus, shrink not from the King,  
Thy father. Thou wast born to bear this thing.

Farewell ! I may not watch man's fleeting breath,  
Nor stain mine eyes with the effluence of death.  
And sure that Terror now is very near.

*[The cloud slowly rises and floats away.]*

HIPPOLYTUS.

Farewell, farewell, most Blessèd ! Lift thee clear  
Of soiling men ! Thou wilt not grieve in heaven  
For my long love ! . . . Father, thou art forgiven.  
It was Her will. I am not wroth with thee. . . .  
I have obeyed Her all my days ! . . .

Ah me,  
The dark is drawing down upon mine eyes ;  
It hath me ! . . . Father ! . . . Hold me ! Help me  
rise !

THESEUS (*supporting him in his arms*).

Ah, woe ! How dost thou torture me, my son !

HIPPOLYTUS.

I see the Great Gates opening. I am gone.

THESEUS.

Gone ? And my hand red-reeking from this thing !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Nay, nay ; thou art assoiled of manslaying.

THESEUS.

Thou leav'st me clear of murder ? Sayst thou so ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Yea, by the Virgin of the Stainless Bow !

THESEUS.

Dear Son ! Ah, now I see thy nobleness !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Pray that a true-born child may fill my place.

THESEUS.

Ah me, thy righteous and godfearing heart !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Farewell ;

A long farewell, dear Father, ere we part !

[THESEUS bends down and embraces him passionately.

THESEUS.

Not yet !—O hope and bear while thou hast breath !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Lo, I have borne my burden. This is death. . . .

Quick, Father ; lay the mantle on my face.

[THESEUS covers his face with a mantle and rises.

THESEUS.

Ye bounds of Pallas and of Pelops' race,

What greatness have ye lost !

Woe, woe is me !

Thou Cyprian, long shall I remember thee !

## CHORUS.

On all this folk, both low and high,  
A grief hath fallen beyond men's fears.  
There cometh a throbbing of many tears,  
A sound as of waters falling.

For when great men die,  
A mighty name and a bitter cry  
Rise up from a nation calling.

*[They move into the Castle, carrying the body of  
HIPPOLYTUS.]*





## NOTES ON THE HIPPOLYTUS

Prologue.—The Aphrodite of Euripides' actual belief, if one may venture to dogmatise on such a subject, was almost certainly not what we should call a goddess, but rather a Force of Nature, or a Spirit working in the world. To deny her existence you would have to say not merely, "There is no such person," but "There is no such thing;" and such a denial would be a defiance of obvious facts. It is in this sense that it is possible to speak of Hippolytus as "sinning against Aphrodite."

For the purposes of drama, of course, this "thing" must be made into a person, and even represented in human form according to the current conceptions of mythology. And, once personified, she becomes, like most of the Olympians in Euripides, certainly hateful and perhaps definitely evil, though still far removed from the degraded, ultra-feminine goddess of Ovid and the handbooks of mythology. In this prologue she retains much of the impersonal grandeur of a Force of Nature. The words "I grudge it not: no grudge know I, nor hate," are doubtless intended to be true.

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P. 3, l. 11, Pitheus.]—Father of Aethra, who was Theseus' mother. Formerly King of Trozên, now ending his days in a life of meditation.

P. 4, ll. 31 ff., She built a shrine.]—An obscure passage, in which I follow the suggestion of Dr.

Verrall (*Class. Rev.* xv. 449). Euripides is evidently giving an account of the origin of a sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandêmos on the Acropolis, which in his day was known as *Ἀφροδίτη ἐπὶ Ἴππολύτῳ*, *i.e.* (as, at least, he imagined) “Aphrodite for Hippolytus,” or “with a view to Hippolytus.” Phaedra, he says, built this shrine *because of, thinking of, Hippolytus*—*i.e.* seeking to exorcise her passion for him, and to fix her errant love at home as she fixed the shrine in the rock. She perhaps—so Dr. Verrall suggests—called it Aphrodite Endêmos, “Love-at-home” or “in-the-land.” When her plan failed, and it appeared that Love will not be fixed down in one place, the name was changed to Pandêmos, “of-all-lands.” Of course it is not certain, nor even very probable, that either Πάνδημος or ἐπὶ Ἴππολύτῳ originally bore the meaning that Euripides and his contemporaries attached to them. *Ἐπὶ Ἴππολύτῳ*, for instance, is quite likely, in its original form, to have meant “the shrine at the place where horses are unyoked.”

P. 6, l. 73, From a green and virgin meadow.] —There are long discussions in the ancient Greek commentators, whether this meadow is real or allegorical. Is it only the garland of his adoration from the meadow of his virgin soul? “It seems odd,” says one of them, “to have a meadow which you are not allowed to enter until you can show that your good qualities do not come from education!” Doubtless it is a real sacred meadow.

Pp. 7, 8, ll. 99, 103.—In two lines, “Then why wilt thou be proud?” and “Clean? Nay, proud,” I follow my own published text, reading *σεμνός* for *σευνήν* and *σεμνή*.

P. 9, l. 121, Of Ocean's tribe.]—The river Ocean was, by some accounts, the father of all fresh and pure water.

P. 10, ll. 142, 143, Hecate . . . Pan . . . the Corybantes.]—These powers all produced seizures, terrors, and ecstasies. Dictynna (often a mere alternative name for Artemis) was, strictly speaking, a Cretan sea-goddess—cf. *δίκτυον*, “a net”—a hunter of the sea as Artemis is a hunter of the land. (She is identified with Artemis on p. 59.) She can catch Phaedra in Limna, the “Mere” in the neighbourhood of Trozên, because Limna is a dried-up lagoon that was once part of the sea, and therefore belongs to the sea powers.

P. 10, l. 151, Erechtheus.]—An old king of Athens.

P. 12, ll. 193, 194, This nameless and shining thing.]—Reading *τοῦ δ' ὅτι τοῦτο στίλβει . . . δυσέρωτες*.

P. 13, l. 228, The Sea-lorn Mere.]—The dried lagoon, Limna, near Trozên, used for chariot races. The “unseaswept sands,” just below, are the same.

P. 15, ll. 264, 265.—“Thorough” and “Naught too much” were mottoes of two of the legendary Seven Wise Men.

P. 16, l. 281, He is on a journey.]—Apparently to an oracle (see below). Perhaps there was a definite tradition saying where he had gone and why, but if so, it is lost. A modern playwright would, of course, fill in these details, for the sake of verisimilitude; the ancient playwright intentionally omits them as irrelevant, just as he omits to give proper names to his Nurses, Messengers, and Leaders of the Chorus.

P. 19, l. 325, What wouldst thou? Force *εἴπε*.]—It was of the nature of sin to reject a suppliant, *i.e.*

a person who threw himself entirely upon your mercy, and implored you. The repugnance that an ordinary person has to such a rejection was felt by the Greeks in a religious way. The ultimate sanction, if you did harden your heart, would be twofold : first, the gods would have a natural repulsion against one who formally and knowingly refused to be merciful; secondly, the suppliant might do what the Nurse threatens to do here, and stay immovable till he died of hunger or exposure—and his death would lie at the door of his rejector !

P. 20, ll. 337-341, Mother, poor Mother, that didst love so sore.]—Phaedra thinks of the general wreck of her house through love. Her mother, Pasiphaë, wife of Minos, loved the pirate or adventurer Tauros ("The Bull"), was cast into prison by her husband, and there starved herself to death (see Appendix, *The Cretans*). Her sister, Ariadnê, had loved Theseus; he saved her from her father's vengeance, but by command of the gods left her on the lonely island of Naxos, where the god Dionysus came and carried her away (see Appendix, *The Theseus*).

P. 22, l. 372, The Isle of awful Love.]—Crete, because of Pasiphaë, Ariadnê, Aëropê, the wife of Thyestes, and other heroines of terrible love-stories.

P. 23, l. 373, O Women, dwellers in this portal-seat.]—This wonderful passage is very characteristic of Euripides—a subtle and beautiful study of character expressed in a formal, self-analysing speech. The "delights" that have tempted and undone her are, first, the pleasure of long talks—with Hippolytus, or about him; next, the pleasure of losing herself in dreams; and thirdly, in some sense not precisely



explained, but surely not difficult to understand, a feeling of shame or cowardice. She feels that if only she had had more courage all might have been well! Why this "shame," this yielding to fear, strikes her at this moment as a "delight," is not explained; but it does not seem to me unnatural.

P. 25, l. 433, Mistress, a sharp, swift terror, &c.]—This speech of the Nurse, so beautiful and so full of sophistries, is typically the kind of thing that caused Euripides to be accused of immoral writing.

P. 28, l. 478, Love-philtres.]—The situation at the end of this scene seems to be this: The Nurse goes in to prepare a magic charm *which shall cure Phaedra of her love*, but mentions that, in order to prepare it, she must get something belonging to Hippolytus to weave into the charm. (Either a material object to be actually woven into the charm, or a word, to be ceremonially caught and woven in—a common device in magic.) Phaedra suspects that she means to speak to Hippolytus, and the Nurse's next words rather confirm her suspicions; but, broken and weary as she is, she has not strength or keenness of mind enough to make sure and to prevent her doing so. A large part of her nature, no doubt, longs to have Hippolytus told, and succeeds at this critical moment in lulling to sleep her exhausted will and conscience.

P. 30, ll. 545–564, Chorus.]—The second strophe and antistrophe ("On Oechalian hills, &c."), are rather obscure. The connection of thought is: "Think of the terrible things that have befallen through love! How Iolê, daughter of Eurytus, suffered, when the angry love of Heracles made him burn her father's house in Oechalia, and carry her off amid flames and

blood. And how Semelê, the mother of Bacchus, suffered in Thebes by the waters of Dirce, when Zeus came to her in a blaze of lightning, and his love was her death."

P. 33, l. 612, 'Twas but my tongue, 'twas not my soul that swore.]—A line constantly misrepresented and attacked (see on *Frogs*, l. 101, p. 187). In reality Hippolytus faces death rather than break the oath that he was trapped into.

P. 34, l. 616, O God, why hast thou made this gleaming snare.]—The fury of this speech, while not unnatural to the youthful saintliness of Hippolytus, is intentionally made bitter and offensive by the playwright, so as to throw our sympathies for the time entirely on the side of Phaedra. We hate Hippolytus, and can for the moment sympathise with, or at least understand, her terrible act of blind self-preservation and revenge.

P. 36, l. 690, He speeds to abase me to the King.]—He had definitely said that he would not do so; but she felt his hatred, she had no reason to trust him, she had just been betrayed by one much closer to her, and probably she had hardly even noticed the actual words in his torrent of rage.

P. 38, l. 712, Know naught and speak of naught.]—This oath of the Chorus is important for the sequel of the play. It prevents them from saving Hippolytus.

P. 39, l. 732, Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding.]—This lovely song seems to me a good instance of the artistic value of the Greek chorus. The last scene has been tragic to the point of painfulness; the one thing that can heal the pain without spoiling the interest is an outburst of pure poetry.

And the sentiment of this song, the longing to escape to a realm, if not of happiness, at least of beautiful sadness, is so magically right.

Phaëthon, who tried to drive the chariot of the Sun and fell, was buried by the river Eridanus (afterwards identified with the Po). His sisters wept over his grave, and their tears turned to drops of amber.

P. 39, l. 742, The apple-tree, the singing and the gold.]—The Garden of the Hesperides, or Daughters of the Sunset, was in the West, near the Pillars of Heracles, which marked the utmost limit to which man might travel. The apple-tree bore golden apples, and it was here that Zeus walked in the garden and first met his bride, Hera.

P. 40, l. 756, Sure some spell upon either hand.] — A curse or spell must have come with her from Crete. It was difficult for a curse to come from one country to another. Exactly like infection, it had to be somehow carried. The women suggest that it came with Phaedra in the ship, and then, when the ship was moored in Munychia, the old harbour of Athens, it crawled up the cables to the shore.

P. 42, l. 803, A fit of the old cold anguish ?] — It is characteristic of Euripides to throw these sudden lights back on the history of his characters. We never knew before (except perhaps from the Prologue) that Phaedra had had these fits of "cold anguish," or that Theseus had noticed them. Cf. p. 56, where for the first time we have a reference to Theseus' own turbulent youth, and his crime against the Amazon, Hippolytus' mother. And p. 50, where we first hear that Hippolytus fasted and followed Orphic rites.

P. 42, l. 804, But now arrived we be.] — A lie, to make the avoidance of explanations easier.

Pp. 43 f., ll. 817–851.]—The laments of Theseus, though they cannot compensate for the drop of dramatic interest after Phaedra's death, are full of beauty and also of character. They bring out clearly the passionateness of the old hero, and also the way in which he only gradually, and then with increasing emotion, realises his loss.

P. 51, l. 977.]—Sinis was a robber slain by Theseus at the Isthmus of Corinth. He tied his victims to the tops of pine-trees, which he had bent to the ground, and, according to Hyginus, sent them flying in the air so that they fell and were killed; as Pausanias rather more intelligibly puts it, he tied them between two pines, which he had bent together, and then let the pines spring back and rack the men asunder. Skiron was another robber in the same neighbourhood; he made travellers wash his feet on the top of a cliff—the Skironian Rock (cf. p. 63)—and then kicked them into the sea.

Pp. 51–54, ll. 983 ff., Hippolytus' speech.] — The ineffectiveness of this speech is, of course, intentional on the poet's part. The one effective answer for Hippolytus would be to break his oath and tell the whole truth. As it is, he can do nothing but appeal to his known character, and plead passionately against all the inferences that his father has drawn as to his general hypocrisy.

P. 54, l. 1036, It is enough.] — The Chorus, debarred from announcing the truth, catch at any straws that tell in favour of the truth.

P. 54, l. 1041, Father, 'tis thy mood that makes me

marvel.]—He means, I think, to make Theseus realise that the charge is flatly incredible. “You yourself do not believe that I have done such a thing { I know, and you know, that you do not believe it. If you did, you would kill me on the spot, not go on talking like this.”

P. 55, l. 1057, No prophet’s lot.]—A prophet spoke from some “sign” or “lot” which he interpreted. This might be an actual “lot,” drawn or cast; or by extension, any other sign, from the flesh of a victim or from the flight of birds.

P. 60, l. 1142, And I, even I, &c.] — The song of this maiden may have given Racine the hint of his additional character, Aricie, the princess whom his Hippolyte loves.

P. 62, l. 1195, And down the road we henchmen followed.]—They walked or ran beside the chariot, accompanying their master to the frontier. Ancient chariots, when used for travelling, went slowly.

P. 70, l. 1391, O breath of heavenly fragrance, &c.] — This and the next line make one doubt whether Artemis was supposed to be visible, or only present as a voice. Cf. p. 6, l. 86, “Though none may see thine eyes.”

P. 72, l. 1420, My hand shall win its vengeance.]—By causing the death of Adônis, whom Aphrodite loved. It is noteworthy how Euripides’ moral hatred of the orthodox Olympian gods breaks out even in this passage, otherwise so exquisitely beautiful. The human beings are full of love and mutual forgiveness. The goddess, radiantly lovely as she is and pure with the purity of dawn, still thinks of revenge, and—as appears at her departure—is, in some profoundly tragic

sense, unloving: a being to be adored, not to love back. The last consolation of Hippolytus is the thought of his perfect devotion to one who in the nature of things can care for him only a little: "I have obeyed Her all my days."

The thing that is missing from Artemis is exactly what is present in the beautiful vase picture of the Dawn Goddess raising in her arms the body of her slain son, Memnon.

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This last scene is one of those passages which show the ultimate falseness of the distinction between Classical and Romantic. The highest poetry has the beauty of both.

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